

# News

from the Illinois Commerce Commission

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## **ICC BEGINS OVERLAY PLAN FOR 815 REGION**

### **New Area Code 779 to be Implemented After February 2007**

The Illinois Commerce Commission has announced that the implementation of a new “overlay” area code will commence next year to supplement the telephone number supply in Illinois’ 815 area code. The new code will be 779.

The 815 area code region extends across northern and north-central Illinois, skirting Chicagoland. It runs from the Wisconsin border on the north, to the Iowa state line on the west, to the Indiana border on the east. Rockford, Freeport, De Kalb, La Salle and Kankakee are among the largest cities in the 815 area code.

#### **History of the New Overlay**

NeuStar, Inc., under contract by the Federal Communications Commission to administer the nation’s telephone numbering resources, originally filed a petition (on behalf of the Illinois telecommunications industry) with the Commerce Commission seeking a new area code for 815 in June 2000. At that time, it forecast that 815 would exhaust its supply of available prefixes during 2003.

The Commission held hearings seeking public comment on the matter in April 2002 and subsequently approved the overlay relief plan in February 2004.

Conservation efforts put in place, such as number pooling and code rationing have forestalled the need for the new area code until now.

Current customers will keep their numbers as well as the 815 area code. The new area code is being introduced so that the numbering administrator will have a continuing supply of prefixes and blocks to assign to new and growing telecommunications service providers. This does not mean that individual 815 telephone numbers are no longer available in the companies’ existing inventories. Consumers seeking additional telephone lines will, in most cases, continue to be able to receive 815 telephone numbers, even after the 779 area code is placed in service.

#### **How an Overlay Area Code Works**

With an overlay, a second area code is added to the same geographic area as the existing area code, with all current phone customers retaining the original area code. New telephone customers for local phone service, cellular and paging services, and alarms, for example, assigned in the same area may receive telephone numbers in the new overlay area code.

The FCC requires that all telephone calls made in the overlay area be completed with 1+10-digit dialing (1 + area code + seven-digit phone number). This includes calls currently dialed with seven digits in the existing area code. This requirement does not affect the cost of the call. A local call will remain a local call, and a toll call will remain a toll call, regardless of the number of digits that are dialed to complete it.

Area code overlays are already in place in 16 states, including Illinois. (847/224)

A customer education campaign will begin on May 15.

Prior to the assignment of numbers with the new area code, customers in the 815 area code will have six months to adjust to dialing 1+10 digits to complete their calls. Mandatory 11-digit dialing will begin on Feb. 17, 2007 and the first 779 prefixes may be placed in service 30 days later.

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